

III. REMARKS

In this Amendment, claims 1, 6, 11, and 16 have been amended. All amendments are supported by the specification. In particular, these claims have been amended to recite “wherein each of the inner and outer prompt objects is an object separate from the report such that each of the inner and outer prompt objects may be used more than once in a single report or may be used in more than one report.” This amendment is supported in the specification by at least the following passage:

The basic functionality of prompts is to “ask a question and get an answer.” Additionally, prompts may provide the following additional features. Prompts can be shared between several objects. When several objects in a report use the same prompt, the question may be asked only once. Each prompt may have a default value. This value can be used when the report is executed offline (e.g., through the use of the scheduler). This value is also useful to the GUI when presenting a prompt to the user. Depending on the type of question that a prompt object asks, a creator of a prompt object may express restrictions on the set of values that are acceptable as answers of the question. The system may thus validate the answer to a prompt. Answers given to any or all of the prompts in a report may be saved. When a report definition is given to the report server to be executed, the saved answers may be used instead of questioning the user. When the report server asks the GUI to resolve a prompt, the report server makes the saved answer available for possible use by the GUI. The answers saved from one report can be applied to the execution of a different report. It is possible to specify that a saved answer to a specific prompt should be used without prompting the user to answer the prompt again. In this case no call back may be made to the GUI to answer these prompts.

Specification, p. 15, line 11 - p. 16, line 4.

Claims 2-5, 7-10, 12-15, and 17-20 remain unchanged.

In sum, claims 1-20 are pending after entry of this Amendment.

A. Rejection of Claims 16-20 Under 35 U.S.C. §101

Claims 16-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter. The Office Action notes that the data structure of a “nested prompt object” is not embodied in a computer-readable medium and is descriptive per se. The Office Action also

argues that the claims are directed to “non-functional descriptive material,” which renders the claims non-statutory. Office Action, p. 4.

As amended, claim 16 recites “[a] nested prompt object in a computer-readable medium.” Claims 17-20 depend from claim 16 and incorporate this claim by reference. As discussed in the claims and specification, a nested prompt has a function because, for example, it may be used in the execution of a report. Accordingly, the instant rejection is overcome because the nested prompt object as recited in amended claim 16 is embodied in a computer-readable medium and has a function.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the instant rejection of claims 16-20 be withdrawn.

B. Rejection of Claims 1-20 Under 35 U.S.C. §102 As Anticipated by Yost

Claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,154,766 to Yost et al. (“Yost”). Applicants note that Yost is commonly owned with the present application. Yost discloses:

A system for automatic generation of personalized output from an on-line analytical processing system. The system processes at least one scheduled service in an on-line analytical processing system and generates personalized output based on personalization information for subscribers of the service to one or more subscriber output devices. The system enables a user to specify global and service-specific personalization information including specification of multidimensional filters to be applied to services and the specification of trigger criteria to be satisfied before output is generated. Personalization information may also be set for each output device for a particular subscriber.

Yost Abstract.

Claims 1-20 recite a “prompt object.” Although Yost discloses prompts, Yost does not disclose a “prompt *object*” (emphasis added). A prompt object is an object embodied in software code that exists separate from the reports, filters, and templates (and the like) that use them.

The Office Action collectively asserts a variety of features of Yost to teach a variety of claim recitations pertaining to prompt objects. The asserted features include: (1) user selections that directly specify the execution of a report, and (2) user selections that directly specify a service. It is unclear whether the Office Action is asserting the service selections in another manner, namely (3) as a property of an underlying report associated with the service. Regardless, none of these three cases disclose or suggest a prompt object as recited in the claims.

(1) In regard to user selections used in report definition, the Office Action cites the following passage:

Agent module 28 may be provided to define reports and queries that may be selected as part of one or more services by broadcast module 20. Agent module 28 may be used to define queries to be performed against the data contained in data warehouse 12 using components, templates, filters, reports, agents, etc. Components may include dimensions, attributes, attribute elements, and metrics--in other words, the building blocks for templates, filters, and reports. Templates generally define a report format and specify the attributes, dimensions, metrics, and display properties comprising a report. Filters generally qualify report content and identify a subset of data warehouse 12 to be included in a report. Filters may also be used to apply set math to report content.

Yost, col. 6, lines 34-45. The Office does not cite this passage directly against the concept of prompt objects, and for good reason. This passage merely discloses well-known filters and methods of creating reports. The passage does not disclose or suggest a prompt that is an object separate from a report.

(2) In regard to user selections of a service, the Office Action specifically asserts that Yost discloses two prompt objects by virtue of the fact that Yost enables the user to identify a service (116) and then select a type of service (118). Yost, col. 10, lines 62-67 and col. 11, lines 1-17. Such identification and selection does not amount to a prompt object. There is nothing to indicate that any prompts used during service definition are part of an object that is separate from service definition. In other words, there is no object enabling selection of a service that exists

separate from any service selection program. Rather, a user may identify a service name and select a service type using a traditional dialog involving user selections.

(3) Application of service selections to an associated report would be improper because service definition exists separate from the associated report. For instance, instructing a service to send a report weekly does not change the definition of the underlying report. It should be noted that while the Office Action does not appear to explicitly apply service selections in this context, it does appear to apply various features of Yost in the context of a “report.”

In sum, no matter how you construe the various user selections in Yost, there are no “prompt objects” because there is no object used in the specification of a service or report that exists separate from the program that executes the specification of the service or report.

Furthermore, as amended, independent claims 1, 9, and 16 recite “wherein each of the inner and outer prompt objects is an object separate from the report such that *[the prompt objects]* may be used more than once in a single report or may be used in more than one report.”

Claims 2-8, 10-15, and 17-20 depend from claims 1, 9, and 16 and thereby incorporate this feature by reference. Yost does not disclose or suggest this feature. In regard to report definition, there is nothing to suggest that there are any objects used more than once. In regard to service selection, Yost discloses only one program that enables the user to specify a service. Also, it appears that this program enables a user to make the service selections only once in a single session.

Claims 3, 8, 13, and 18 recite “wherein the first answer to the first question of the inner prompt object serves as a validation property to the second answer to the second question of the outer prompt object.” Importantly, these claims depend from independent claims that recite that “the inner prompt object is nested within the outer prompt object.” Yost does not disclose or suggest this feature. The Office Action asserts the following passage of Yost:

For example, the user may select an option to either prevent personalization, require personalization, or allow personalize optionally. Upon completion of these steps, the service may be stored by service definition module 42 in a database structure to enable users to retrieve predefined services to subscribe to these services through subscription interface module 52.

Yost, col. 12, lines 6-14. Based on this passage, the Office Action argues that the recitation of claims 3, 8, 13, and 18 are anticipated by stored preferences that would become default validation values when a user subscribes to or cancels an existing service. Office Action, p. 5. The disclosed passage accordingly involves “select[ing] an option to either prevent personalization, require personalization, or allow personaliz[ation] optionally,” and then “enabl[ing] users to retrieve predefined services to subscribe to these services through subscription interface module.”

Yost fails to disclose this feature of claims 3, 8, 13, and 18 for several reasons. First and most importantly, there is no way in which the acts of selecting an option, retrieving predefined services, and subscribing to services can be said to involve two objects wherein one object is “nested within” the other. Second, the asserted actions of selecting, retrieving default values, and subscribing do not necessarily involve prompts.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the instant rejection of claims 1-20 be withdrawn.

IV. CONCLUSION

For all the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that all outstanding objections and rejections have been overcome or rendered moot. Further, all pending claims are patentably distinguishable over the prior art of record. Any amendments are supported by the specification. Applicants accordingly submit that these claims are in a condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested.

This response is submitted within the three month shortened statutory period for reply. Therefore, no extension of time fees are necessary. Authorization is hereby granted to debit or credit our Deposit Account No. 50-0206 for any fees or credits, including any extra claims fee.

Respectfully submitted,

HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP

Date: 3/17/05

By: Thomas D. Bradshaw
Thomas D. Bradshaw
Registration No. 51,492

for Brian Buroker
Registration No. 39,125

HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP
Intellectual Property Department
1900 K Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006-1109
(202) 955-1500 (Telephone)
(202) 778-2201 (Facsimile)